

"THE BANDWAGON"

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October 1942.

An Interesting Account of the William P. Hall Circus Boneyard  
By Robert Earl Sams, C.H.S.

The alluring profession of the circus has always held a great attraction for boys of all ages. William Preston Hall of Lancaster, Mo., was no exception. Inspired with the desire to own a show of his own Bill Hall worked hard taking a job for board and a small wage. Saving his money until he had about eleven dollars, he purchased a horse, traded it successfully, and bought still another horse. Thus in a few years he became known as having quite a reputation as a judge of horse flesh.

In the year 1903 the World's Fair was held in St. Louis and with it came W.P. Hall to stake his claim as fame as a showman. A Chicago firm contracted him to supply them with horses at his own price, so well did they respect his judgment and integrity. Soon St. Louis was flooded with horses as the company forgot to set a limit.

Also at the Fair was a show called The Boer War Show for which Hall had the job of handling the horses. He decided that the show business was for him and so he purchased the stranded Lemon Bros., Circus at Omaha, Nebr., in the fall of 1903. Next season the show went out of Lancaster Mo., as the William P. Hall Circus.

Rain of weeks duration encountered by the Hall Circus cut into the profits and Hall decided that he had better stick to his horses and so the next season the William P. Hall circus was leased as Howe's Great London Circus under different management and Hall had been initiated into the defunct circus business.

Later came the Pan-American Shows and the W.L. Main Circus sans title to the Hall Circus Boneyard; being sold piecemeal at a handsome profit to its owner. Still later came the other shows to the farm, Hall sometimes buying the show out, right down to its posters.

The Hall farm is located on the northern boundary of the Village of Lancaster in Schuyler County some 200 miles north and slightly west of St. Louis. The farm is surrounded by prairie land in the little village of around a thousand population.

On the farm, up until a few years ago could be found just about every piece of equipment that pertains to a circus. Carved and gold-leafed bandwagons and chariots were lying there. Along the western edge of the farm were dozens of weather-beaten baggage wagons with titles of circuses on their sides in peeling paint. Two big barns housed the best of the parade equipment with heavily carved tableaux representing just about every important country in the world. Such wagons as Russia, Great Britain, United States, America, Asia, and others, were all there. The wagons were covered with fleece-lined tarpaulins with the stencil-cilled letters on their sides such as "Parade Tableau - America," etc.,

There were also animals of every kind to be found there, including about thirty elephants and thirteen camels heading the list. There were lions, tigers, hyenas, a puma, Zebra, an elk and a sacred cow. Among the elephants was to be found Major the first elephant owned by the American Circus Corporation when that company had its first ten car show. With tusks over seven feet long Major was a handsome beast that any show would be proud to own. The elephants were constantly rehearsed in their tricks, ready at a moments notice to join out for fairs, conventions, or with in-door or outdoor circuses.

The private railroad spur for the farm was about a mile from the farm proper and accomodated about forty big circus railroad cars. At that time there were 70-foot steel flats with peeling paint; advertising cars with lurid descriptions and gaudily painted sides. Steel and wooden flats and stock cars with many an old time name slightly visible in the weathering paint; Gifford Bros. Shows and Yankee Robinson Circus cars were there which had been standing in the same spot for more than a quater of a century.

(continued on second page).

## William P. Hall Circus Boneyard (concluded).

William Preston Hall died in May of 1932 leaving a debt of \$50,000 and the circus boneyard as security to the bankers. He had his office in an old advance car of the Yankee Robinson Circus which was supposed to have been part of Lincoln's Funeral Train. This car had a large wooden elephant on top of it at the entrance to the Hall Farm, which was the Hall trade mark. W.P. Hall had the nickname of Diamond Billy Hall because he wore so many diamonds even when sleeping. His main business, however, was horse-trading and he had offices as far away as Cape Town in South Africa.

The splendid photo enclosed with this issue of the Bandwagon is from a negative kindly supplied by Ralph Hadley, whose advertisement for a complete set of Hall Circus Farm photos appears elsewhere. The sleepers shown in the photo were those on the Buck Jones Wild West Shows, while the broken-down flats in the foreground were on the old Robbins Bros., Four Ring Wild Animal Circus. We can highly recommend Ralph's set of photos, and take this further opportunity of thanking him on behalf of Circus Historical Members, for the use of his negative.

THE AUCTION BLOCK

Thanks for the splendid response to bids for the last auction. Here are several more fine items donated by CHS members. Remember - send in your bids to the Secretary, Jack Lyon not later than October 30th. Do not send any money with your bids. The fortunate winners will be notified by mail.

Lot 1 - A beautiful one-sheet lithograph of Buffalo Bill on his horse. Perfect condition. Buffalo Bill's Wild West - Sells-Floto Circus. Donated by Burt L. Wilson. A nice item indeed!

Lot 2 - Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows - 10 x 28" herald. For the early years of the combination. Many of the real old time performers shown and named. A wonderful collection piece. Thanks also to Burt L. Wilson for this item too. (needs slight repairs - but reading matter not torn.)

Lot 3 A collection of a dozen and a half newspaper articles and pictures of the big Show Fire in Cleveland a short time ago. Your chance to fill up this gap in your scrap book. Donated by Burns M. Kattenberg.

Remember - send in your bids - and very often a low bid takes the lot!

Possibly many members were wondering what was meant by LIME-LIGHT ARTIST and SOAP-DECORATOR - referred to on the CHS Historical sheet Number 4. Through the kindness of one of my correspondents, Scott Leslie, an old trouper of the by-gone stage and movie days, of Tampa, Fla., I have received the following explanations and pass them along to the members: "I remember away back in yesteryear, advertisers used to send out Soap Decorators and of course the circus had them too. The artist was quick on drawing fancy pictures and designs, along with the lettering, and he would do the drawing on the STORE WINDOWS WITH SOAP I've seen these displays up and down the main streets in many towns and they were clever and made attractive ads. . . . As to the Lime-light-artist . . . you see back when gas light was the best thing in the big cities and little towns had only kerosene lamps, the Spotlight for the theatres etc., had to use gas. In the theatre (or elsewhere) the "artist" would set up his spotlight in front of the balcony and with his SPOT he could brighten up the individual and with his FLOOD he could cover the stage". I am certain that these explanations will help members to understand just what is meant by these two old styles of advertising mentioned on the sheet.

Thanks Scott, for the information.

W.W. Tyson,

Pawnee Bill Wild West Show was wrecked by a wind and rain storm at Bayonne, N.J. July 17, 1906. Damage \$ 7000. Pawnee Bill suffered a broken arm.

Proposed Divisions of C.H.S.

Don F. Smith, Founder of C.H.S. and Publicity Director has been working out a plan whereby C.H.S. Membership can be divided into Divisions; Each Division will be named after a prominent Bandwagon and each Division shall have a Director or Chairman named from that District. It is also suggested that each Division collect history of all shows in that section ( and of course any other information for general use). So that members can become acquainted with the plan , the proposed divisions are listed below, and we welcome correspondence , and any changes regarding the same, from all members. Let us have your ideas. There were ten original charter members, and we feel that there should also be 10 divisions, in tribute to them. Does this meet with your approval? . . . . . Let Don hear from you at once.

Division One

Michigan,  
Ohio  
Indiana

Division Two

Maine  
Vermont  
New Hampshire  
Rhode Island  
Massachusetts  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
Maryland

Division Three

New Jersey  
New York  
Pennsylvania  
Virginia  
Kentucky

Division Four

North Carolina  
South Carolina  
Georgia  
Alabama  
Florida  
Mississippi  
Tennessee  
Arkansas  
Louisiana

Division Five

Wisconsin  
Illinois  
Minnesota  
Iowa  
Missouri

Division Six

North Dakota  
South Dakota  
Nebraska  
Kansas  
Oklahoma  
Texas

Division Seven

Montana  
Idaho  
Wyoming  
Colorado  
New Mexico  
Nevada  
Utah  
Arizona

Division Eight

Washington  
Oregon  
California

Division Nine

Canada -- all provinces

Division Ten

South America and all  
other Countries outside  
the U.S.A. and Canada

The allotment of Bandwagons to all these divisions will be a matter of serious thought. However for example, we do not think there will be any objection to the setting aside of GREAT BRITAIN or "(John Bull" as it is also known) for Canada.

With further reference to CHS letterheads mentioned on recent Historical Sheet - Don Smith, had donated the cost of these letterheads for the members, and he will send these to all who request them, and include just 10¢ to cover cost of mailing. Do not overlook to write to Don for your supply of these , and we thank him on behalf of the members for his kind generosity in this connection. Show your appreciation of his gesture by writing him as soon as you receive this Bandwagon issue.

THE HARRIS NICKEL PLATE SHOW  
by Historian C.E. Duble, C.H.S.

One of the prominent old-time one ring shows of years ago was the W.H. Harris World-Famous Nickel Plate Show originated in 1883 in Chicago by W.H. Harris. This show was a big success. As far as I can learn the show was 10-car size during its long career. The show came to Jeffersonville, Ind., in the early 1890's and the last appearance was on September 28th 1901. The writer passed bills for the show on that occasion. Admission was 10 and 20 cents. Among the performers were Miles Orton, principal bare back rider; the Millette's aerial performers etc.; and the St. Leon Family Acrobats. One of these girls Elsie At. Leon was Star of the play "Polly of the Circus". The side show and menagerie were under one tent.

A parade feature was a combination Bandwagon and Lion Den, this being of elaborate design, with heavy carvings and mirrors; band rode atop under canopy over rear of wagon and drawn in parade by six or eight camels decked out in oriental robes and trappings.

Show had one elephant "Gypsy" of immense size, appeared in parade and performance. Hand bills had a half tone cut of the Lion Den referred to and a cut of the elephant with this exact wording "Famous, Historic, Gypsy Still Lives - - - - THE LARGEST ELEPHANT THAT WALKS THE EARTH".

The Territory of the Harris Nickle Plate Show was the middle West and South. Winter Quarters at the time were Valdosta, Ga. The elephant killed her keeper O'Rourke there, the Winter of 1902. W.H. Harris died about 1902 and Chas. C. Wilson became manager for Mrs. Harris. Later he was traffic Manager for years with Ringling Bros. After twenty-one years tour the show came to an end in August 1904 at Sebree, Ky.

The old dirt ring bank remained at Jeffersonville for years. On the same spot where the tents of the Harris Nickel Plate Show were in 1901, the High School stands today.

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DON SMITH'S VISIT TO MICHIGAN STATE PRISON - August 2, - 1942.

Referring to Doc Waddell's sermon on "BANDWAGON" which appeared in our August issue -- we have received a more detailed account of Don's visit with the Circus Parson -- and we will recount this in Don's own words: "Started for Jackson, Mich., where I enjoyed one of the most memorable days I've known, as a circus fan. Met Doc Waddell at his Hotel, and we were called for by the Prison Station Wagon, and taken out to the "Big House" 4 miles from town. After waiting in the reception room for a while (during which he told me many circus anecdotes) we were joined by Assistant Chaplain Rev. Walls, a colored Minister, and then proceeded to the cell block where all "lifers" are quartered. Services were held there in the small auditorium, before probably 200 men, black and white and all ages.

"Doc's sermon was received with sincere applause, and I couldn't help putting myself in their place as they listened to him, for he spoke as one of them. All were extremely polite, and quiet-mannered, and it was hard to realize that each had committed some serious social offence in the outer world. Doc introduced me as "a true friend of the Circus and its people" and mentioned C.H.S. and I answered with a few words of appreciation".

We then had breakfast in the prisoners' dining Hall, and proceeded to the main Chapel, where most other prisoners were gathered and the service was repeated, but this time, was accompanied by the Prison Male Choir and a trumpet soloist, and organ. The boys presented Doc with a beautiful bouquet which they had grown, after which he again introduced me as a circus fan, and quite a few came up to shake hands and ask me questions later.

"It was an experience I'll never forget. We met several old Circus men and one of them I felt particularly sorry for, was an old fellow who had been on Forepaugh-Sells and had been sent down on pretty weak evidence. He had been there 30 years". -- The Editors feel sure that this description of Don's visit will fit in very nicely with the previous article, and make it the more valuable for future reference.

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NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY'S MAILBAG.

Received a very interesting letter from P.R. Hemphill CHS who gave a complete account of Carnivals and Grand Stand Shows caught by him this season. He also stated that the following circuses played Hagerstown, Md., in September of the following years: Great Wallace Shows, Saturday 29th, 1900; and Thursday, 17th, 1903; Buffalo Bill's Wild West, Friday, 13th, 1907 and Hagenbeck-Wallace, September 13th, 1934. Note that two dates are "Friday, 13th" - but they would be Lucky Days for P.R. with a circus in town!

Another member for CHS. Welcome to Arthur P. Gunther, of 178 Spruce St., Manchester, Conn. Art's special interest at the moment is gathering data to build a model of Terrell Jacob's Wild Animal Circus.

Art Stensvad CHS is making plans now to send out his circus train and circus parade drawings and anyone wanting to see this show should give Art his address. The name of the show is to be CAMPBELL BROS & STENSVAD COMBINED SHOWS, America's First Choice. A most imposing title - but having seen a previous circus put out by Art we can recommend the new edition to all. Write him and have this new show routed to your town!

Bob Green CHS of Pontiac, Mich., plans on showing circus movies to nearby members and fans at his home. The novelty for the evening will be some circus movies in colour.

CHS Treasurer, Walter J. Pietschmann and Publicity Director Don Smith, made two trips to Chicago to photograph the BIG SHOW. On their second visit a pleasant few hours were spent with Burt L. Wilson CHS. Both Walter and Don report several large orders for photos from personnel of the circus.

Something special is promised the members of the Editors of the Bandwagon for the December issue, due early that month. Illustrating the feature article will be a photo which is very rare, and the Bandwagon has been very fortunate in securing permission to use it.

Members we are sure will be very sorry to learn of the continued illness of Wm. Kasiska CHS and we all wish him a speedy recovery to Health. Why not take a few minutes and drop Bill a line. We know that he would really appreciate it. Give him the circus news from your city

How many members caught that interesting article by Burns Kattenberg CHS in the Sept 27th issue of the Philadelphia Enquirer? Nicely written with several photos of "twisters" and also a nice one of Burns.

Chas. Kitto CHS wrote a very nice account of his visit to the R-B Circus at Madison, Wis., but space will not permit us to print it. He advises that nearly all trace of the fire is now wiped out by re-painting etc. Charlie also visited the Johnny J. Jones Carnival and mentioned his having seen the Clyde Beatty Wild Animal Circus. He reports that the Beatty Show met with a disastrous wind storm at Beloit, Wisc., smashing down the front almost beyond repair and tearing the canvas.

Robt Sams CHS informs us that he spent two good days on the Wallace Circus Lot when it played Birmingham, Ala., his home town. He was well received by the show, and reports a good performance.

Robt. Danner CHS visited the Big Show when it played Muncie, Ind., and took some photos. We also received a nice letter from W.W. Green Jr., CHS giving an account of his visit on the Dailey Bros., Circus. Every detail is mentioned and Bill surely had a wonderful day and received every courtesy on the lot from both Executives and performers alike.

We wish to mention the newsy letters received throughout the past season from Frank Norton CHS who has been troup ing with the Bright Lights Exposition Shows. We really wonder how Frank finds the time to write his letters, knowing as we do that he has many important duties to attend to on the lot.

Ken Amadon CHS writes that he plans to build some Model wagons during the Winter months. Although very busy he is one of our most enthusiastic members. If interested in model work - why not write to Ken?

ADVERTISEMENTS

TWENTY-FIVE SNAPSHOTS taken at old Hall Circus Farm, Lancaster, Missouri, showing cars, wagons, animals buildings, etc., Postpaid - \$1.75. Ralph Hadley, Lowry City, Missouri.

RINGLING PERFORMERS PURCHASED OVER 500 DON SMITH PHOTOS, during visit of THE BIG SHOW in DETROIT. There must be a reason! Time to fill a limited number of orders for collectors, now. BIG LIST & BEAUTIFUL SAMPLE PRINT FOR TEN CENTS. Many views taken in color this season. DON SMITH--Box 246-FARMINGTON, Mich.

ALL NEW TERRELL JACOBS WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS PHOTOS. These include views of the ONLY PARADE made this year by the circus, as well as shots of the bally, etc. Taken at Toronto, Ont., Labor Day, Sept. 7th, 1942. All clear, fine views, and will make a good addition to any collection... Set of TEN PHOTOS, postcard size.. Postpaid for \$1.20. John B. Lyon, 22-A Charles Street, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

CASH WAITING FOR CIRCUS LETTERHEADS Old Couriers, or programs. Also want issues of WHITE TOPS except 1939, and HOBBIES circus columns since Nov. 1941. Send your lists. DON SMITH--Box 246 Farmington, Mich.

NOW ADDED:

A New Circusiana Department in The Hobby Spotlite Magazine. You'll like this newsy informative section as well as its usual articles on various hobbies and its many other interesting features. Sample Copy - 10¢; Year -\$1.00.  
SPOTLITE PUBLICATIONS  
Box 163B Oakland, Maryland, U.S.A.

FOR SALE

BLUE FRENCH POODLE CIRCUS DOG BOTTLES about 8" high. Dog stands on hind legs and holds a drum for clown to beat. He wears a clown cap. \$1.00 a pair.

LARGE COLORED LITHOGRAPH 25x32" of P.T. Barnum's Museum in 1855 signed by Benecke the artist. It is in Peter's book "America on Stone" and "Iconography of Manhattan" by Stokes, Struck from Original stones many years ago. Price \$4.00

DINTY MOORE GLASS AND BOTTLE MUSEUM, 158 West 11th St., New York City, N.Y.

FIRE PHOTOS!

The Big Show's menagerie fire in Cleveland - photos that every collector should have. Set of SEVEN 5x7" professional closeup photos for \$1.75. Send orders to Vernon W. Cady, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio.

ATTENTION C.H.S. MEMBERS

Does any member or old-timer know the whereabouts of an old marble bust of Dan Rice? We have an enquiry in this connection from a party who is writing a book on Dan Rice's Life, and would like to locate either the original bust, or a photo of the same. How about this?

It has been suggested that CHS issue one or more Poster stamps - to be sold to the members and to collectors of Poster Stamps. This is a fast growing Hobby. What do you think of this and what designs would you suggest? Let us hear from you with your ideas about this matter.

The matter of a Club pin for CHS has often been mentioned in correspondence received from Members. Before proceeding further it will be necessary to know how many would be ready to purchase such a pin. As it would be necessary to place an order for a definite number at the start, we would like to have your opinion on this. It must be remembered, however, that as our membership list is not such a large one - the cost of the individual pins may run as high as \$1.50. There would be absolutely no profit to CHS on these pins; at this price the pins would be of good quality, with safety catches, and of Sterling Silver. Please write to the Secretary - whether or not you are interested. The response to this notice will be a guide for the future.

Members ---- How do you like the BANDWAGON - six pages for this month